(b) if so, whether it is a fact that the talks in Tokyo ended with an agreement to further strengthen dialogue within the ambit of the India-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement,

(c) what specific steps were suggested to give life to the stagnant trade with Japan;

(d) whether it is a fact that trade relations with Japan are on the decline; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E V K S ELANGOVAN) : (a) Yes, Sir

(b) and (c) During the recent visit of Commerce and Industry Minister to Japan, both sides agreed for improvement of the investment environment, development of supporting industry, investment promotion, and securing stable supply of natural resources & investement cooperation in their development through various measures with a view to reinforcing economic relationship between the two countries.

(d) No, Sir

(e) Does not arise

Steps to increase Border trade with China

4353. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether government has made any efforts to secure overland access to Chinese markets through Nathu La and other border points;

(b) whether there is any trade between India and China through roads and border towns presently;

(c) whether government had discussed the issue of cross-border trade with China through roads;

(d) if so, what is the reaction of Chinese Government;

(e) what steps will be taken to increase border trade with China; and

(f) the details of steps proposed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (f) Indo-China border trade through Lipulekh Pass was resumed following the signing of an MoU in December 1991. The Protocol for extension of border trade through Shipkila Pass was signed in September 1993. Presently, the border trade with China is being conducted through these two routes. During the visit of former Prime Minister to China in June 2003, the two sides agreed to open a third route at Nathu La for conducting broder trade. During the visit of Chinese Premier to India in April 2005, both sides reviewed with satisfaction the implementation of the memorandum on the border trade throuh Nathu La Pass between the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China and the Sikkim State of the Republic of India.

Fall in Tea Production

4354. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that tea production in the country for the period 1st January to 31st December, 2004 was 82.02 crore kilograms as compared to the tea production for the sam period in 2003 which was 85.75 crore kilograms;

(b) if so, what are the reasons for the fall in production of tea;

(c) whether it is true that some Northern States like Jammu and Kashmir, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh have also reported tea production in recent years; and

(d) if so, what incentives the Ministry proposes to give to these States for the production of tea?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) Tea production in the country during 2004 was 820.22 million kg as compared to 857.06 million kg during 2003 was due to unfavourable agro-climatic conditions in North and South India.

(c) and (d) Himachal Pradesh is traditionally a tea-growing State, though